Sylvia Hel, 5/11

5/4/67

Dear Dave,

Before I left for a week I was very far behind schedule on my work. Now I am even further behind. Long ago I learned that if I am to do what I intend, I must limit myself to what serves a constructive purpose. Getting into wrangles does not, and I avoid them. Had I intended making complaints, perhaps I would have written you about some of your own writing. Had I any concern about Liebeler I'd not have spoken to you as openly as I did last December.

Your long letter awaited me on my return, part of a six-inch stack of mail. When I saw this accumulation I was reminded of Liebeler's phrase when he really made no effort to learn how a change of address in Oswald's name was mailed to the right postal substation when Oswald could not have done it:"We'll add that to the stack". I work my way down through my stack. I do not abandon it like Liebeler did. However, because I antifipated the contents of your letter, I opened it immediately and read the first page. I understand what you are saying. I will read all of it as soon as I can. If it requires further comment I will make it.

Those things of which you say you were accused are the things of which you were accused. I welcome your denial. However, it is some time since these accusations reached me. You are aware that I did not complain to you. My only concern in the matter is with your integrity, for I could not care less than I do about what Liebeler thinks of me and my work and I am unworried about any errors in it that are mine. I am aware of certain possibilities of compleint by him and I anxiously look forward to his srticulating them. In fact, I hawe made every effort I honestly could to induce him to, as I believe you are aware, without singling him out. I prefer to address Liebeler in terms of his work and his record. I have not even dunned him for the $5.05 he owes me for ten months. He is unique among those very many people who have asked us to send him a copy of a book on his word that he'd pay in not having paid, as he is unique among the former staff members in having asked for a freebee. I went all the way out to California last December, at a time when I should have been promoting and distributing Whitewash II, then just off the press, because he had agreed to debate me on the Lomax show. That month I also expected to find him opposite me in three other studios, in New York, Chicago and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ San Fransisco, and I did not. Imagine the ignominy of hisw saying that on a Sunday, when it is closed, he had to be in the Archives in Washington when I was in the Los Angeles studio to confront him. But let him live with that. As you are aware, I have not clubbed him with this, for I still seek neither villains nor heros, only the truth. But his own record casts him in a villein's role, for his continuing record is consistent in its dishonesty. I told you he will have to decide whether he is Jekyll or Hyde. His failure to decide its its own decision, and with that he will have to live. From the reports reaching me, he in currently engaged in one of his less honest endeavors. To the ~~xx~~ degree that it is within my power, he will reap his due.

I will continue to write of him as I have, not vindictively, not singling him out for abuse, but on his record alone. Daily I learn more of that and its significance. The longer he delays a confrontation with me, which means, really, with what he has done and what it means, the more difficult it will be for him, the more certain his position in history becomes that of a villain and the more convincingly it appears to have been his intent. If he wants to be so remembered, that is his decision. I will not do with him what he did with others, using Ineppstein as his tool. I will not single him out unless his words and conduct demand it. He has his own share of the responsibility, and it is not honorable

to seek to saddle him with more. That is in any event more than enough.

Because whether he is your friend or whether it is your relationship of another kind with him that might compromise you in getting a letter such as this and not divulging its contents to him, I assure you I have no objection to it. If you are his friend, or if you think your relationship with him demands you tell him of it, please do so without misgivings, for each of us must do what his conscience dictates. More than having no objection to it, I tell you it is only his own refusal to engage in a dialogue with me, in persona or in writing, that has kept me from saying more to him directly. Ultimately, I have no doubt I will, for without assistance from me he is making his own position intolerable. Not a single one of his former associates has behaved as dishonestly as he, has misrepresented as much or has as entirely disreputably exploited the willingness of the press to give him space for an intendedly dishonest purposes. These are serious accusations, actionable if false. They are not false, and he will institute no action. I challenged him to do so earlier.

All of us make mistakes, Dave, and mature men assume none is infallible. Jesus trusted Judas, didn't he? Each of the members of the Commission and of the staff once had a defense against the monstrous thing each was part of. Those who like Liebeler are most vocal and most dishonest disappate this possible defense. You have seen what I did in answer to Specter. Soon you will see what I have done with Liebeler, just on his record. There was a time when Liebeler could have said merely that he was wrong and been believed. Those of us who knew the fact might have wondered if he could have been that incompetent and nothing more, but he would have gotten away with it. With the present attitude of the press, he still might. Before long that day will be past.

I particularly welcome his current attacks on Garrison. He is a hysterical fool to have made and continued them. He is a blind fool to have assumed that Phelan is both right and impartial. When Phelan mentioned Ferrie and did not mention Ferrie's Marcello connections, both through employment and use of Marcello's lawyer, especially because Phelan himself wrote for the same magazine an expose of Marcello(and because Liebeler had to have known of this himself), Phelan raises questions about his own purposes and intentions. Further, I assure you that from what I myself learned in New Orleans Phelan is wrong about Russo and what he when told Sciambria. Of all the people in the world, there is none who can do what he is doing less honorably than Liebeler, because of all the people in the world, no one is more responsible for the existence of what now exists in New Orleans than Liebeler. This also you will soon learn. Of all the wrong things he did, and they are many, perhaps this is the worst and least defensible.

Before going to New Orleans I had written my own book on it, an enlargement of what I had intended to include in Whitewash III. So I can represent to you what I know that Garrison can know of Liebeler's performance. When that trial is over, Liebeler will be a legal laughing stock if Garrison knows no more than I do. Without doubt he knows more, and without doubt he is more competent to exploit it. He also will get more attention with what he does. Hence Liebeler is a bigger and more hysterical fool to gratuitously assault him and a more irresponsible lawyer for doing this before Garrison's case is presented. Again, no one compelled this of him. But I am delighted that Liebeler is so reckless, for ultimately it will help establish the truth, which is my sole purpose....This letter has grown longer than I intended and I must get to other work. I shall not have time to read it, so I hope you can fathom the intent when there is error. I accept your lorill, especially because the alleged price was the Altgens picture, which I got the AP to find and make available and told you how to get. Further, even if you did what you are accused of, I am without complaint or you'd have heard from me. As long as you do what you really believe is right no man can properly criticize you for it. But be certain that you are right.

Sincerely,